



## Editorials

### Mahalo to Elizabeth M. Adams MD

**Norman Goldstein MD**  
Editor

For members of the Hawaii Medical Association who were not able to attend the 141st Annual Meeting on the Big Island October 30 - November 1, 1997 (and that includes your editor), by all accounts Betty Adams did another superb job reporting the scientific sessions.<sup>1</sup>

I still don't understand how she could be at three sessions at the same time, but I am told that she had "cub reporters" helping her.

Betty has been our Annual Meeting reporter for 4 years. Betty was named HMA Physician of the Year for 1997.<sup>2</sup>

Thanks again, Betty, for synthesizing our Annual Meetings for Journal readers. Please do enlist your "cub reporters" again. We're counting on your help for many years to come.

#### References:

1. *Haw Med J.*, 1998; 1:388-389
2. *HM News*, 1996; 11:1



## Presidents Message

### Federal Fraud Enforcement Why You Should Have an Effective Compliance Plan

**Leonard Howard MD**

Physicians and others involved in providing patient care need to be aware of their potential legal liability. No doubt you have read about federal government fraud enforcement activities against hospitals, clinical laboratories, durable medical equipment suppliers, hospices and home health agencies. While enforcement actions to date against physicians have been isolated, physicians and their practices are not immune to enforcement actions. You may feel that because you work for a large medical organization, that they are responsible for the coding process. In speaking with the authorities at the interim AMA meeting about this issue the answer I received was that even though the physician does not personally fill out the Medicare charge form, the physician still holds the legal responsibility for it being done properly, and will be held personally responsible for any charge of fraud or abuse.

That's why your practice needs an effective, comprehensive compliance program. Establishing and maintaining a compliance plan will help you avoid activities that could be attacked under the fraud and abuse laws and ensure that your claims will not be categorized as fraudulent.

The AMA Office of the General Counsel, Health Law Division has prepared a document providing the basic structure that physicians and others may follow for establishing a compliance program that can be incorporated into their practices. We have copies of these documents available. Physicians on Oahu may stop in and pick up a copy. Physicians on the neighbor islands may call and we will mail you a copy.

We consider this an important relevancy issue for the physicians of Hawaii. We encourage you to set up your compliance program as soon as you possibly can.



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